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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OMAN - QUALIFIED BUT UNLIKELY CANDIDATE FOR UNHRC

REF: STATE 90247

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard J. Schmierer, Ambassador, Department of State,
Embassy Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) In response to reftel, Post deems Oman a suitable candidate for the UNHRC from a human rights record perspective; however, Oman's overall foreign policy and particularly, the way it manages its relationship with Iran would likely preclude running for a seat on the UNHRC. The British Embassy asked us if we would support this idea a few months ago, but has not gone in to address the proposal with the Omanis. Post does not believe it would be useful to formally address the topic with Oman at this time.

¶2. (C) Oman has a good record on human rights issues and that is improving every year. This year Oman was ranked in Tier 2 on the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, the only country in the Gulf and one of only four in NEA to obtain this ranking. There is a high degree of religious freedom and Oman is a leader in promoting interfaith work.

¶3. (C) Oman has a history of maintaining an independent foreign policy and acts in its own national interests, even when that involves differing from the rest of the generally closely aligned Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). However, coupled with that is a very strong non-interventionist foreign policy that makes Oman very unlikely to interfere or censure another country for any internal activity. Overall, Oman would be unlikely to be supportive of country-specific resolutions.

¶4. (C) Oman walks a careful balance in public perception with the U.S. and Iran. While reliant on the U.S. for overall physical security, Oman ensures that publicly it is not seen as a pawn of U.S. policy and carefully cultivates a "relationship" with Iran based on non-substantive issues. Due to this desire to maintain balance, Post believes it extremely unlikely that Oman would consider running against Iran for a seat on the UNHRC.
Schmierer